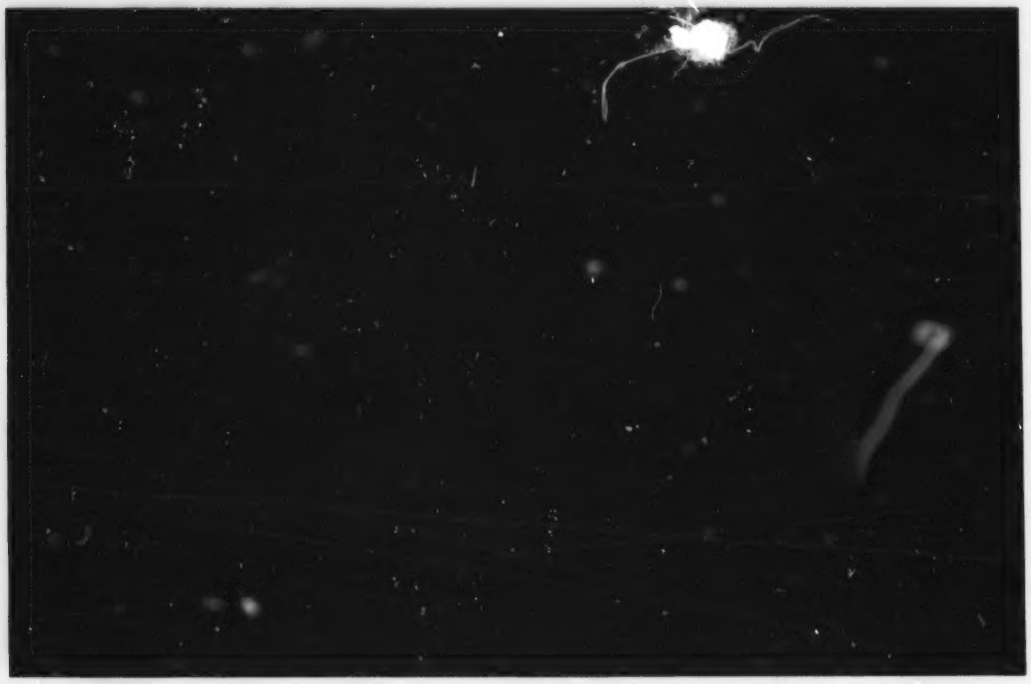
Northern East Slopes
Sustainable Resource and Management
Environmental Strategy

The NES Strategy
Interim Report



Storm on the East Slopes
by Robert Guest oil painting, 1993
Collection of the Alberta Art Foundation

Prepared by
The Regional Steering Group for the NES Strategy

January 2001

Pub No. I/869
ISBN: 0-7785-1445-5 (Printed Edition)
ISBN: 0-7785-1446-3 (On-line Edition)
Web Site: http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/
Copies of this document can be obtained from:

Information Centre
Alberta Environment
Main Floor, Great West Life Building
9920-108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2M4

Telephone: (780) 422-2079

Alberta Environment
Northern East Slopes Region
#107 111-54 Street
Edson, Alberta T7E 1T2

Telephone: (780) 723-8390

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

102-03486/

Northern East Slopes
Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management
Strategy

The NES Strategy
Interim Report

Prepared by
The Regional Steering Group for the NES Strategy
January 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 1999, Alberta's Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management was released stating that "regional plans will provide a level of detail between provincial and operational decision making." The Northern East Slopes Environmental Resource Committee (ERC) initiated a regional process in June 1999 called the Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy (NES).

The ERC and key stakeholders developed the NES Strategy terms of reference. The final terms of reference were approved by the Interdepartmental Assistant Deputy Ministers responsible for Integrated Resource Management (IRM) on February 14, 2000 and endorsed by the Deputy Ministers Sustainable Development Coordinating Committee on March 29, 2000. Subsequently, a Regional Steering Group (RSG) comprised of government and non-government members was appointed by the Minister of Environment to develop recommendations for current and future resource management in the Northern East Slopes region. The RSG is responsible for leading the development of the NES Strategy. The non-government RSG members were selected through a public application process. The NES Strategy recommendations and Interim Reports are being submitted to the Ministers responsible for Integrated Resource Management (IRM).

To ensure the Strategy addresses the issues and concerns of all those with an interest in the region, the RSG held public meetings to discuss the vision, values and goals of the Strategy, which are the key framework statements around which the NES strategy will be built. Public meetings were held during October 2000 in Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache, Fox Creek, Whitecourt, Drayton Valley and Grande Prairie. Additional meetings were also held with major industries active in the Strategy area, environmental groups, as well as with federal, provincial and local government employees.

A separate and distinct consultation process involving Aboriginal communities was undertaken in conjunction with the public consultation program. The RSG recognizes the need to build longterm relationships with Aboriginal communities. Therefore, the Aboriginal consultation program has not progressed as quickly.

Presentations were made to all municipal governments within and surrounding the NES Strategy area. Each council indicated support for the project and were encouraged by the priority consultation initiated by the RSG. It is anticipated that the municipal governments will be provided meaningful opportunities to influence the development of the NES Strategy at milestone stages.

Opportunities are being identified and communications initiated with government sustainable development programs such as Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Provincial Land Use Strategy, Environmental Stewardship Incentive Program, and the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Program. Additional examples include the Northern Alberta Development Council, Foothills Model Forest, Jasper National Park, and other regional economic development initiatives.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the RSG is submitting this Interim Report to the Minister of Environment. The report includes the following:

- The process the RSG undertook to establish the framework vision, values and goals for the NES Strategy.
- A summary of the municipal, public and Aboriginal consultation and suggested improvements.
- Regional vision, values and goals that will lay the foundation for the future direction of the NES Strategy.
- Preliminary insights on the content and process that the RSG intends to consider during the next phases of the NES Strategy.

The detailed workplan and budget will be developed during Phase 2 commencing in January 2001.

The NES Regional Steering Group is anticipating confirmation from the Ministers responsible for Integrated Resource Management that the actions and efforts under taken to date by the RSG are consistent with the terms of reference and government policy direction.

Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION 4

1.1 Background 4

1.2 Purpose of the NES Strategy 6

1.3 Purpose of the Interim Report 6

2.0 PROCESS 6

2.1 Regional Planning Process 6

3.0 PREPARATION OF THE NES STRATEGY – PHASE 1 8

3.1 Initiation of Communication Links 8

3.2 Phase 1 Consultation Summary 8

3.3 Public Consultation 8

3.4 Municipal Government Consultation 9

3.5 Aboriginal Consultation 10

4.0 NES STRATEGY REGIONAL VISION, VALUES, GOALS AND INDICATORS 11

4.1 Regional Vision, Values and Goals 11

4.2 Indicators 13

5.0 PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS 13

5.1 Insights on Content 13

5.2 Insights on the Process to Date 14

Figures

Figure 1: NES Strategy Project Management Linkages Chart 5

Figure 2: NES Strategy Planning Process 7

Appendix

Appendix 1: NES Strategy Terms of Reference 15

Appendix 2: Regional Steering Group Information 23

Appendix 3: The Abells Group Inc. Stakeholder Consultation Final Report 27

1.0 INTRODUCTION

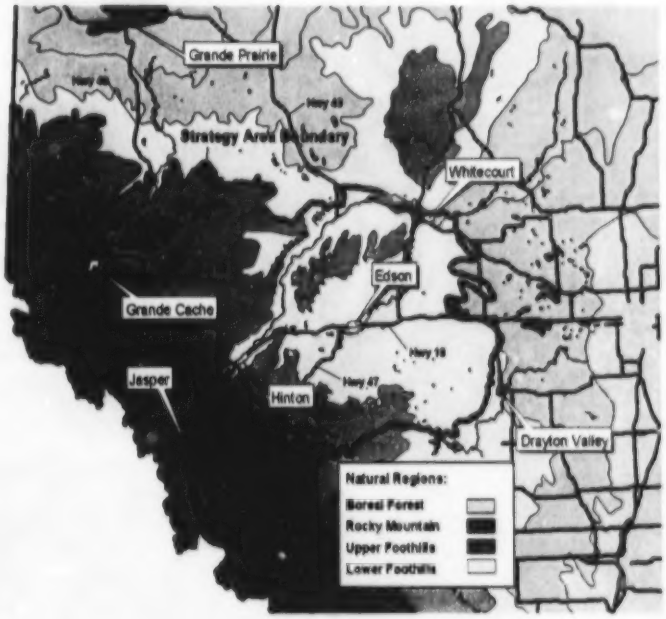
1.1 Background

In March of 1999, Alberta's Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management was released, stating that "regional plans will provide a level of detail between provincial policy and operational decision making." The Northern East Slopes Environmental Resource Committee (ERC) initiated a regional process in June 1999 called the Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy (NES Strategy).

The ERC and key stakeholders developed the NES Strategy terms of reference. The final terms of reference (Appendix 1) were approved by the Interdepartmental Assistant Deputy Ministers responsible for Integrated Resource Management (IRM) on February 14, 2000 and endorsed by the Deputy Ministers Sustainable Development Coordinating Committee on March 29,2000.

The NES Strategy is a prototype for provincial Integrated Resource Management incorporating economic, environmental and community values to develop broad resource management goals. This Strategy will enhance communication, co-operation and consultation among industries, communities, governments and Aboriginal peoples. By addressing current and emerging resource management issues the NES Strategy will provide clear, strategic direction for managing resources and addressing cumulative effects in the region and at the local level. This Strategy will be revisited on a regular basis to reflect societal values, new technologies and scientific information.

The NES Strategy will concentrate on a 40,405-square kilometre area within the Northern East Slopes Region of Alberta. The primary communities affected by the NES Strategy include Edson, Hinton, Whitecourt and Grande Cache.

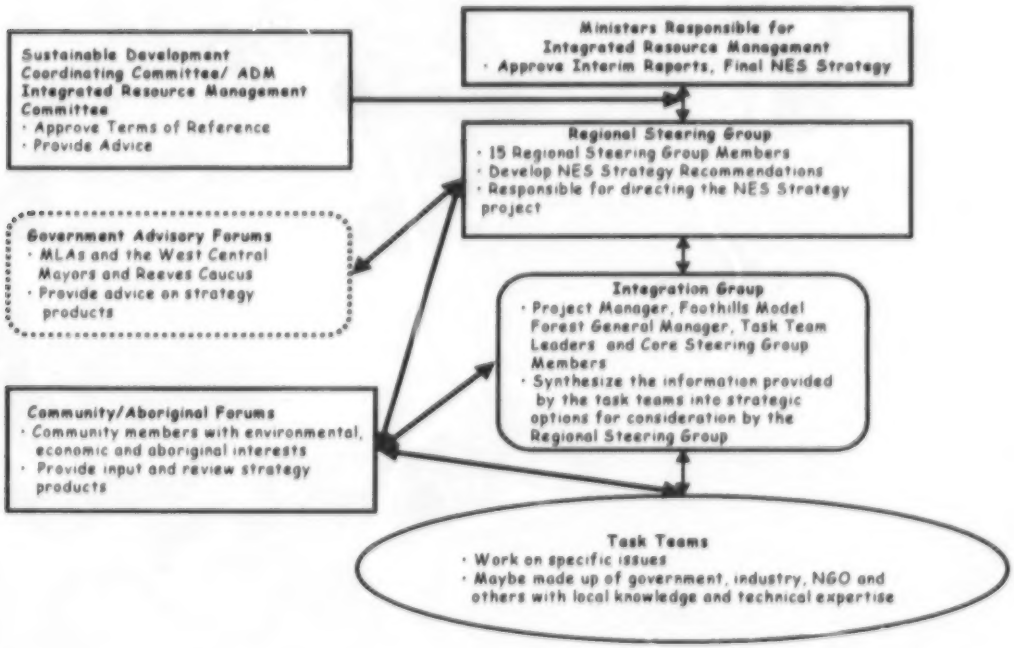


The NES Strategy builds upon current government thinking in Integrated Resource Management (IRM). IRM is a decision-making model for stakeholders from all sectors, which have regional interests and are affected by resource and environmental management decisions. The stakeholders in the NES Strategy area include:

- Four government departments responsible for IRM: Alberta Resource Development (ARD); Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AFRD); Alberta Environment (AENV); and Alberta Economic Development (AED);
- Municipal and Federal Governments;
- Industry;
- Communities of interest and/or geographical area; and
- Aboriginal peoples.

A Regional Steering Group (RSG) comprised of government and non-government members was appointed by the Minister of Environment to develop recommendations for current and future resource management in the Northern East Slopes region (Appendix 2). These recommendations are being submitted to the Ministers responsible for Integrated Resource Management. The RSG is striving to develop a regional vision, purpose, value and goal statements that will balance sustainable resources and environmental management concerns.

FIGURE 1: NES STRATEGY PROJECT MANAGEMENT LINKAGES CHART


Sustainable Development Coordinating Committee/ ADM Integrated Resource Management Committee
· Approve Terms of Reference
· Provide Advice
Ministers Responsible for Integrated Resource Management
· Approve Interim Reports, Final NES Strategy
Regional Steering Group
· 15 Regional Steering Group Members
· Develop NES Strategy Recommendations
· Responsible for directing the NES Strategy project
Government Advisory Forums
· MLAs and the West Central Mayors and Reeves Caucus
· Provide advice on strategy products
Integration Group
· Project Manager, Foothills Model Forest General Manager, Task Team Leaders and Core Steering Group Members
· Synthesize the information provided by the task teams into strategic options for consideration by the Regional Steering Group
Community/Aboriginal Forums
· Community members with environmental, economic and aboriginal interests
· Provide input and review strategy products
Task Teams
· Work on specific issues
· Maybe made up of government, industry, NGO and others with local knowledge and technical expertise

1.2 Purpose of the NES Strategy

The NES Strategy is designed to develop a process and implement a common set of goals and values for the region that balance use between diverse interests. This set of goals and values will guide sustainable resource use, community development and regional infrastructure by way of regulatory and policy change, regional planning of industrial and social infrastructure and societal use and management of the land.

1.3 Purpose of the Interim Report

The interim report has been developed by the NES Strategy Regional Steering Group (RSG) to provide the Ministers responsible for Integrated Resource Management with an update on completion of Phase 1 (Project Initiation) of the NES Strategy. This report outlines the vision, values, and goals related to regional sustainable resource management that were developed with members of the public who could be directly affected by NES Strategy outcomes. Included in this report are preliminary insights that the RSG intends to consider through Phases 2 and 3.

A detailed workplan and budget for Phase 2 (Working Phase) will be submitted by March 31, 2001 and Phase 3 (Final Phase) by the end of December 31, 2001.

The NES Regional Steering Group is anticipating confirmation from the Ministers responsible for Integrated Resource Management that the actions and efforts under taken to date by the RSG are consistent with the terms of reference and government policy direction.

2.0 Process

2.1 Regional Planning Process

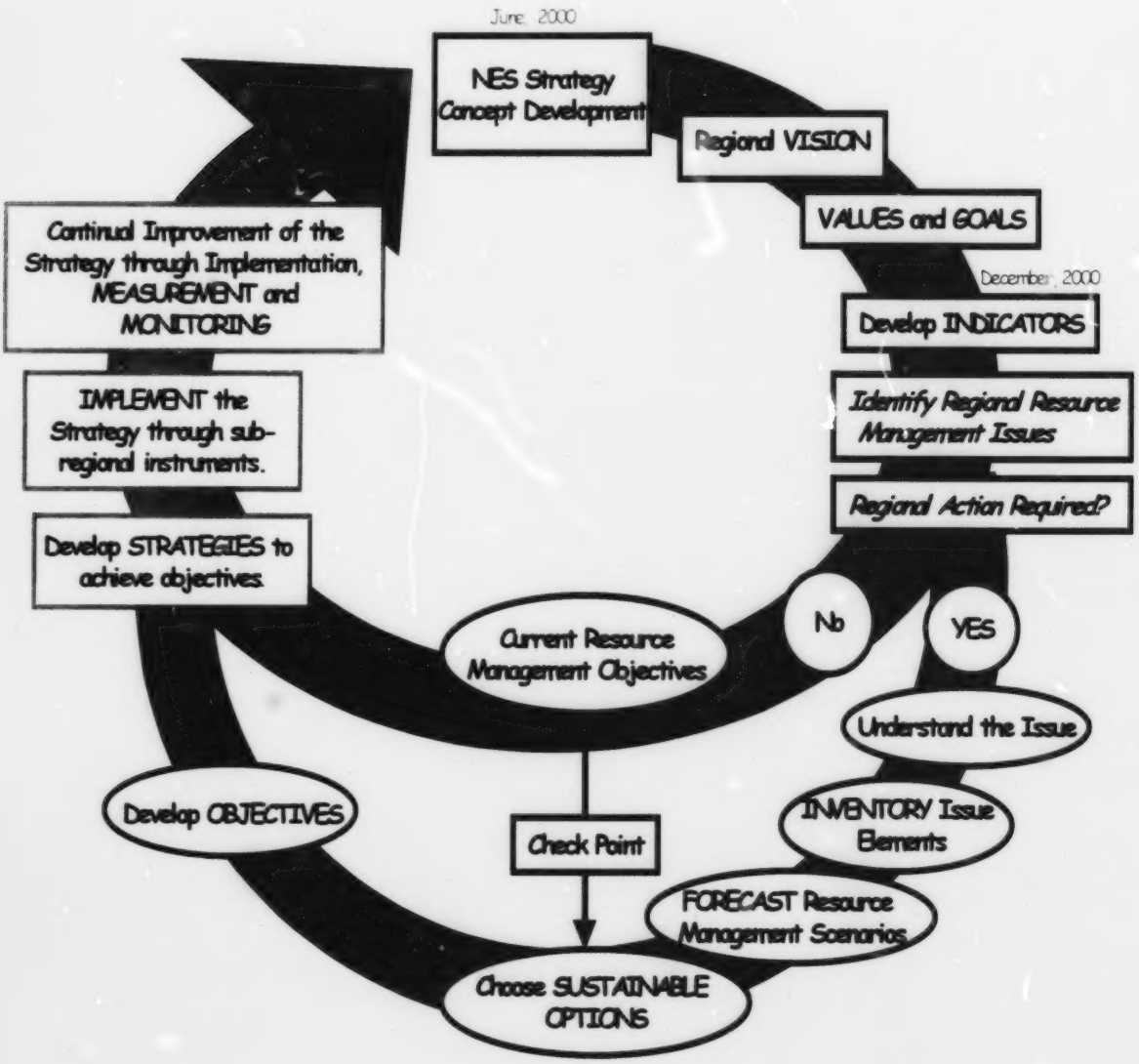
The regional management process is consistent with sustainable development and environmental management approaches that have been developed throughout the world since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Common to these initiatives are the recognition that societal goals and values articulated through public consultation and the scientific selection of indicators for meaningful assessment of progress towards goals are essential. From the goals and indicators, specific objectives are developed, followed by a cycle of implementation, monitoring/performance assessment, review and improvement.

This internationally accepted process is recognized in Canada by the Canadian Standards Association in its National Standard for Sustainable Forest Management, and by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers.

The NES Strategy regional planning process incorporates some innovations made necessary by the unique context of planning at the regional level. It includes specific steps for the identification and prioritization of issues (concerns about values) that require regional action. It recognizes that implementation will be

through sub-regional tools/mechanisms. It clarifies and recognizes what current sub-regional tools and implementation processes are working adequately, and intervenes only in those areas where there is an identified need for intervention. A key feature of this planning process is that it will be dynamic and adaptive to new science, information, technology and changes in societal values. Fundamental to success throughout the process will be the meaningful engagement of affected stakeholders.

FIGURE 2: NES STRATEGY PLANNING PROCESS



3.0 PREPARATION OF THE NES STRATEGY – PHASE 1

The regional vision, value, and goal statements lay the foundation for the future direction of the NES Strategy. As the Regional Steering Group moves through the planning process, these statements will be continually refined through a process of engaging a variety of people from industry, communities, organizations etc. who are directly affected.

3.1 Initiation of Communication Links

Opportunities are being identified and communications initiated with government sustainable development programs such as Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Provincial Land Use Strategy, Environmental Stewardship Incentive Program, and the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Program. Additional examples include the Northern Alberta Development Council, Foothills Model Forest, Jasper National Park, and other regional economic development initiatives.

3.2 Phase 1 Consultation Summary

To ensure the NES Strategy addresses the issues and concerns of all those with an interest in the region, the RSG consulted with municipal governments and Aboriginal communities, and hosted public meetings to discuss the vision, values and goals of the NES Strategy.

Public meetings were held during October in Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache, Fox Creek, Whitecourt, Drayton Valley and Grande Prairie. Additional meetings were held with major industries (forestry, oil and gas producers, agriculture and tourism) environmental groups, Aboriginal communities, as well as federal, provincial and local government employees.

During the consultations, participants were also asked to identify "what is important to them", by suggesting meaningful criteria that would indicate whether the NES Strategy is working. These criteria will be used to identify indicators, the tools planners use to measure changes in the economy, environment and community, in order to objectively verify the degree to which the goals of the NES Strategy are being achieved.

3.3 Public Consultation

Participants attending the meetings were asked to review and respond to the framework statements by examining both their meaning and importance. They were also asked how they would know if this NES Strategy was working five to ten years from now, by identifying criteria that would indicate whether the values were being respected and the goals achieved.

The public meetings were advertised through the local media and by direct mail to a list of 1400 people supplied by the NES Project Manager. Follow-up phone calls

were also made to remind people on this list to attend. At the meetings, information about the NES Strategy was handed out to participants that described what the NES Strategy is, how it is building on current government thinking in Integrated Resource Management (IRM), its purpose, the process, and the group responsible for its development (the RSG).

To provide participants with the opportunity to fully participate in the consultation process, by either speaking out and/or by providing written comments, a questionnaire was handed out that paralleled the format of the meeting. Participants were asked to submit their written comments at the end of the meeting, along with an evaluation form that examined the effectiveness of the consultation process.

To verify that comments recorded during the meetings accurately reflected both the content and the spirit of the discussion, volunteers were recruited from each meeting to verify the accuracy of the transcript. The written record of each meeting also includes a transcript of the written comments handed in with the questionnaire and evaluation form. (Transcripts of the comments can be provided upon request).

The summary analysis identifies major themes raised by the consultation process, as well as specific issues related to each of the framework statements. The questionnaire also asked participants to list the values in order of priority and to evaluate the consultation process. The results of both of these exercises are included in this summary analysis (Appendix 3).

Follow-up focus group discussions were held after the RSG reviewed the results form the main consultation program and revised the regional vision, values and goal statements. The purpose of focus group sessions was to obtain reaction to revised statements as compared with the original statements.

The participants generally expressed approval for the revisions made by the RSG. One member said, "I am impressed that these improvements actually reflect what I heard in the meeting I attended". The overall reaction was very positive.

3.4 Municipal Government Consultation

Municipal Governments within and adjacent to the NES Strategy area who may be affected by resource decisions resulting from the Strategy must be informed and have opportunities to influence the Strategy at milestone stages through the planning process. Councils have been engaged in the process through:

- the West Central Mayors and Reeves Caucus. The chairperson from the Caucus sits as a member of the RSG; and
- direct presentations/written; questionnaires; workshops with staff, and individual invitations to meet with the RSG.

Introductory presentations about the NES Strategy were made to the West Central Mayors and Reeves Caucus and all 13 councils who are within or adjacent to the Strategy boundary. All councils support the Strategy and the level of engagement for councils in the process.

Suggested improvements for consultation with Municipal Governments in the next phases of the Strategy are:

- Use focus group discussions with municipal councillors and staff to develop further understanding of municipal issues and recommendations for integrated solutions within the NES Strategy.
- Increase discussions with the West Central Mayors and Reeves Caucus.
- Continue to make direct presentations to councils to provide information and identify individual council issues that are regional in nature.

The RSG completed the first round of public consultation between October and December 2000. Information received during the consultation process affirmed the regional vision, values and corresponding goal statements The RSG reviewed the information received during the consultation process and revised the regional vision, value and goal statements to reflect public input.

3.5 Aboriginal Consultation

The Aboriginal consultation process is ongoing and positive and will require further time to establish relationships with the Aboriginal groups within the NES Strategy area. The RSG will continue to nurture a relationship with these groups and work with them to develop suitable Aboriginal consultation processes that can be utilized during future consultation initiatives.

The RSG has formed a sub-group to assist in developing options with the Aboriginal communities to identify an approach that will build long-term relationships.

Some of the options being discussed by the RSG are:

- Proposal by Alexis First Nations (Includes a seat on the RSG and opportunity to facilitate consultation program with Aboriginal communities).
- Hire an Aboriginal Consultation Coordinator who answers to the RSG and coordinates a consultation program. The program would identify individuals from each community to work with and facilitate consultation within their own communities. At periodic times workshops with all the key individuals would be held to disseminate information and/or seek input and advice.
- Host a workshop with key people from each community to discuss options and develop an approach that all communities can comfortably participate.
- Develop an Aboriginal Steering Group (Recommendation from The Abells Group Inc. Stakeholder Consultations Final Report).

The Abells Group Inc. was contracted to facilitate the public and Aboriginal consultation program and assist with strategic communications for Phase 1 of the NES Strategy

The Regional Steering Group feels the NES Strategy is on track based on the timeframe developed by the Environmental Resources Committee within the project terms of reference.

4.0 NES Strategy Regional Vision, Values, Goals and Indicators

4.1 Regional Vision, Values and Goals

The vision, values and goals created by the Regional Steering Group are dynamic and will change as the Regional Strategy evolves. All values must be able to work in harmony with one another upon completion of the project.

Value - A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.

Goal - A broad, general statement that describes a desired state or condition related to one or more values.

Indicators - A measurable variable used to report progress toward the achievement of a goal.

Source: Canadian Standards Association
CAN/CSA-Z808-96 A Sustainable Forest Management System: Guidance Document

Regional Vision

"Integrated management of natural resources in a manner which ensures a healthy and sustainable environment, economy, and community that can be enjoyed by present and future generations."

Value: History and historical resources
Goal:

- To ensure that historical resources are identified and respected in the decision-making process.
- To ensure that our history is understood and respected in the decision making process.

Value: Wise resource use
Goal:

- To optimize all value added opportunities from the resource.
- To minimize waste.
- To encourage sustainable use.
- To integrate activities among all stakeholders and governments.

Value: Wilderness lands
Goal:

- To integrate management of designated protected areas within the regional landscape.
- To ensure wilderness lands are maintained.

Value: Public enjoyment of the great outdoors
Goal:

- To provide opportunities for responsible enjoyment and appreciation of our natural environment.

Value: Healthy and sustainable communities
Goal:

- To understand, respect and protect a community's culture and sense of being.
- To encourage sustainable resource use and economic diversity through regional economic activities and cooperation.

Value: Integrity and fairness in decision making
Goal:

- To assure that decision making process is timely, transparent, predictable, consistent, fair and equitable.
- To ensure decisions are made and revisited in light of current science, technology and societal values.

Value: Healthy and sustainable economy
Goal:

- To optimize economic benefits and economic stability through diversification.
- To encourage conditions that maintain opportunities for resource development.
- To maintain our competitiveness (in the global market).

Value: Healthy and sustainable environment
Goal:

- Conservation of biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels within the region.
- To ensure that the quality of air, water, and soil are at healthy level.

4.2 Indicators

Following the development of the regional vision, values and goals the Regional Steering Group chose to use public consultation to identify meaningful criteria that would indicated a successful process. To do this, the consultants used questions to probe what is important by asking "how will you know if these values are being respected, five to ten years from now?" and "how will you know if the goals are being achieved, five to ten years from now?". Examples of meaningful criteria were suggested in all communities engaged through the public consultation process. (Appendix 3)

These criteria provide the basis for the development of preliminary indicators. The RSG with assistance from specialized task teams will use this information to identify specific indicators that will clarify the goals and values by providing a quantitative measurement of the progress towards achievement of NES Strategy objectives. The following are points made by the RSG regarding indicators:

- indicators will drive the rest of the process and direct it down to the land base;
- "what gets measured gets done";
- ongoing and accurate assessment of the indicators will provide resource users and managers an insight on the status of an issue;
- indicators will provide direction for the development of management strategies;
- indicators will provide a means to measure progress; and
- indicators provide clarity to the values and goals.

5.0 PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS

5.1 Insights on Content

The following are preliminary insights regarding the potential content of the NES Strategy have been noted by the RSG:

- Improved integration of activities of all stakeholders on the regional landscape is required.
- Need to develop options for developing a regional database and sharing agreement.
- Enhanced regional management structure may be needed to implement the integration of resource activities.
- Harmonization and streamlining of legislation, regulation and policy is a key requirement.
- The NES Strategy must be dynamic and adaptive.
- There will be budget implications for implementation and continuation of NES Strategy.

5.2 Insights on the Process to Date

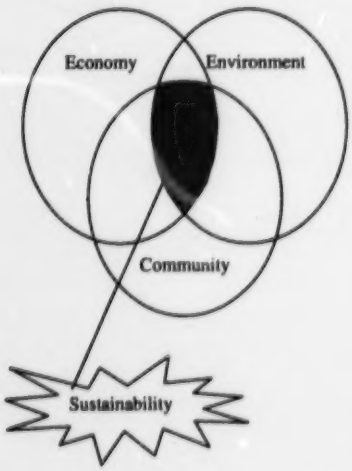
The Regional Steering Group is responsible for the development of a preliminary process that will manage current and emerging resource management issues. This process will be incorporated into future Strategy initiatives within other regions throughout Alberta. The following points are offered for new regional strategies:

- Environmental Resource Committee in each region should create the selection committee for the RSG. The process for selection must be open and transparent. Consider having external representatives on selection committee.
- Provide more information on the project and the selection criteria in advance of call for interest for the selection committee.
- Ensure wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding of the region are represented on the RSG.
- Need to recognize that consensus model is time consuming.
- Need an independent facilitator and government project management.
- Improve awareness of the NES Strategy and IRM through regional and provincial public communications.
- Municipal Government consultation and involvement could be enhanced through target group sessions with councillors and administration staff.

APPENDIX 1: NES STRATEGY TERMS OF REFERENCE

FINAL Terms of Reference
Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy
March 30, 2000

> *"To effectively integrate resource management, we need to look at large areas ... and deal with large-scale issues such as biodiversity, airsheds, forest fire regimes and the resource dependence of a regional economy" (Doug Radke, Deputy Minister, Alberta Environment, December 1999).*



INTRODUCTION

In March of 1999, the Alberta Government stated its commitment to the wise management of Alberta's natural resources and environment for the benefit of all Alberta's present and future generations; in the Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management. The Vision of Sustainable Development for Alberta as stated in the March 1999 Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management policy is set out below.

"Alberta, a member of the global community, is a leader in sustainable development, ensuring a healthy environment, a healthy economy, and a high quality of life in the present and future."

"Integrated Resource Management is based on cooperation, communication, consideration of all values and consultation before action. It recognizes that everything is connected to everything else." (Doug Radke, Deputy Minister of Alberta Environment). The Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management states that "regional plans will provide a level of detail between provincial policy and operational decision making". Regional plans are at a scale of 1:250,000.

The government departments accountable for ensuring the commitment is achieved are Alberta Environment; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Alberta Resource Development; and Alberta Economic Development. The Regional Environmental Resource Committees (ERCs) are responsible for leading and implementing the Alberta commitment initiative at the regional level.

Building upon other provincial experiences in Integrated Resource Management (IRM), the following terms of reference will provide a blueprint for action to develop a Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy (NES Strategy). The development of the NES Strategy will consider existing planning policy (i.e., Eastern Slopes Policy). Additionally, the NES Strategy will maintain a seamless link to incorporate ongoing regional development, regional research and resource management initiatives (i.e., Foothills Model Forest, Caribou Cumulative Effects, etc).

STRATEGY PRODUCTS/OUTCOMES

The products of the NES Strategy will include:

- A regional vision with goals and indicators, that outlines desired sustainable resource use and considers economy, environment, community and aboriginal interests.
- The identification, prioritization and analysis of values, issues and concerns in realizing our regional sustainable resource management vision.
- Strategies to achieve the goals and to resolve outstanding issues and concerns.
- A process to monitor, evaluate, report and improve the NES Strategy.

"You need to be aware of your neighbour and other industries' needs and concerns."
(Peter Aschenmeier, Chairman NES Land and Forest Service Grazing Advisory Committee, November 1999)

Some of the desired outcomes of the NES Strategy include:

- Enhanced communication and co-operation among industries, communities, government and aboriginal people;
- Clear strategic direction for managing resources in the region;
- Improved management of cumulative effects;
- Better understanding of the relationships between economic, environment, and community interest that are important for decision making within the region.
- Efficient, effective and consistent land management decisions, approvals and referrals;
- Identification of sub-regional and local planning priorities;
- Increased certainty with respect to the development of the region's natural resources;
- Community concerns are considered in resource development and environmental management decisions.

TIMEFRAME

An interim report, outlining the regional vision, goals, indicators, prioritized concerns, and required actions will be completed by December 31, 2000. This preliminary version of the Strategy will include an identification of critical and immediate issues, and action plans for their resolution, based on fast-tracked analysis and consultation. The subsequent consolidated Strategy document, completed in the spring of 2002, will additionally contain comprehensive strategies for a wider range of issues based on more extensive analysis and consultation.

A proposed workplan and budget for the 2000/2001 fiscal year will be developed by April 2000. The interim report will finalize the budget for the 2001/2002 fiscal year.

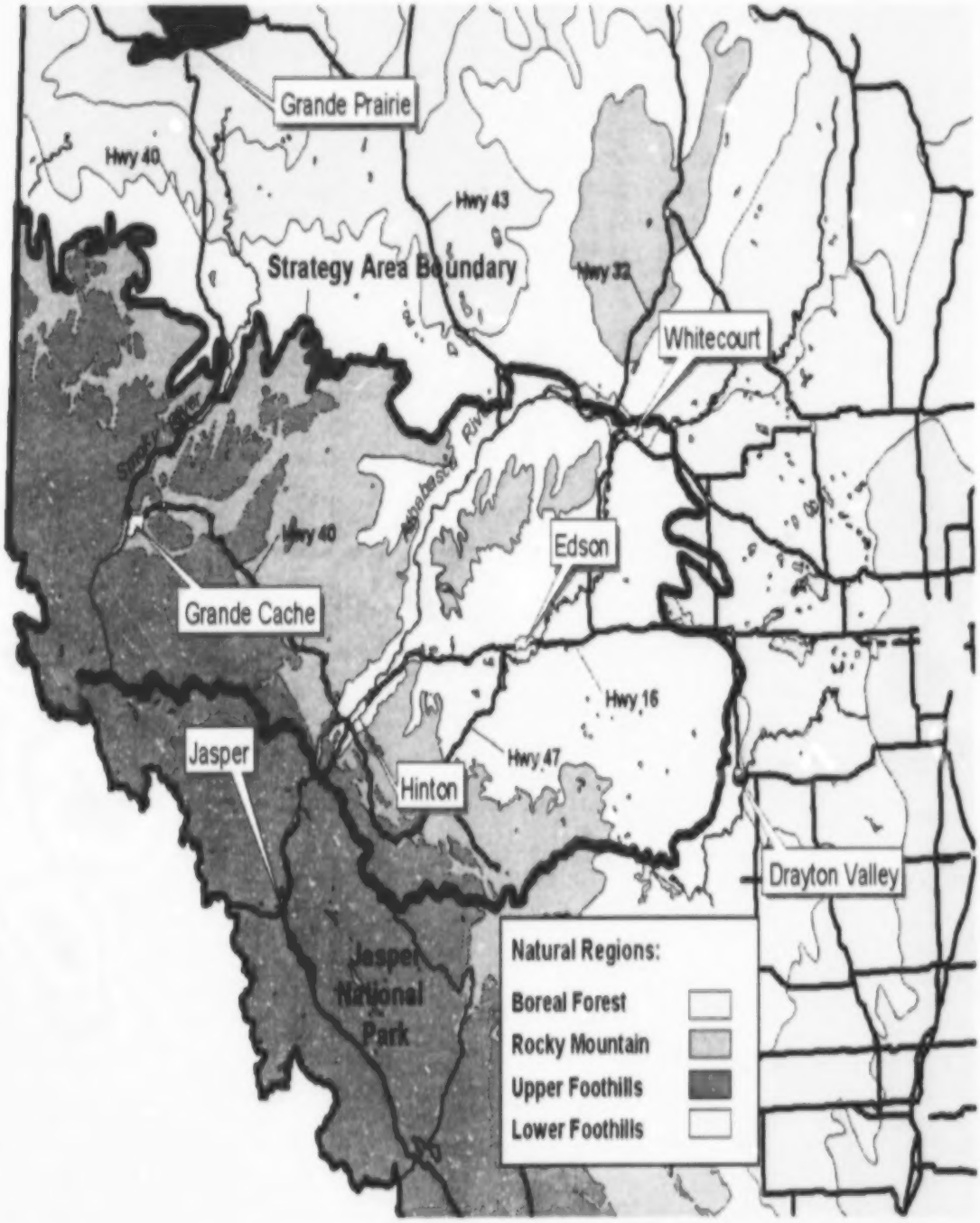
REGIONAL STRATEGY BOUNDARY

The NES Strategy area, as shown on the attached map, will include portions of the Athabasca and Smoky River watersheds in Alberta. At a more detailed scale, the study boundary will include:

- The Smoky River watershed within the Rocky Mountain Natural Region and the Upper Foothills Natural Subregion;
- The Athabasca River watershed within the Rocky Mountain and Foothills Natural Regions with a boundary of Highway 43 to the Northeast.

Integrated resource management must consider that ecosystems, flows and resources overlap and cross jurisdictional boundaries. As a result, the regional area boundaries will remain flexible and change if the issues and concerns being addressed warrant it. Regional alliances based on economic interests at the community level will be explored within the study boundary.

FIGURE 1: NORTHERN EAST SLOPES SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY BOUNDARY



Active, effective consultation was identified as the most important component of a successful regional strategy (Ideas for Integration Workshop, December 1999)

CONSULTATION

Alberta's Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management states that "Resource and environmental decisions shall include consultation. This includes ensuring:
That decisions on resources and environmental management are taken in a provincial context, considering broad public interest, and involve input from those communities and industries that will be most directly affected by them. A role for provincial and national interests through consultation must also be provided."

Desired Outcomes for Consultation

- To identify and understand the perspective and concerns of citizens and communities in the Northern East Slopes area.
- To obtain advice and input that will expand the information and the options upon which decisions are based.
- To anticipate potential problems and address them before conflicts arise through ongoing public consultation.
- To maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of proposed changes by consulting citizens and communities
- To promote awareness and understanding with the general public by creating opportunities to learn about and participate in public involvement processes.

The Government of Alberta supports a "good neighbour" approach. (Proposed Aboriginal Policy Framework, 1999)

Consultation Forums

Government/Aboriginal/Community forums and focus groups, made up of municipal and provincial government, community and sector members with economic, environmental, community and aboriginal interests, will be asked:

- To review, influence, critique and support the interim and final products of the planning process through a variety of public consultation mechanisms such as workshops.

(Note: The Edson and District Sustainable Communities Initiative, is a model to consider for community involvement.)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Northern East Slopes ERC will support the development of the NES Strategy. This committee includes membership from Alberta Environment, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Resource Development, Alberta Economic Development, Alberta EUB and Jasper National Park.

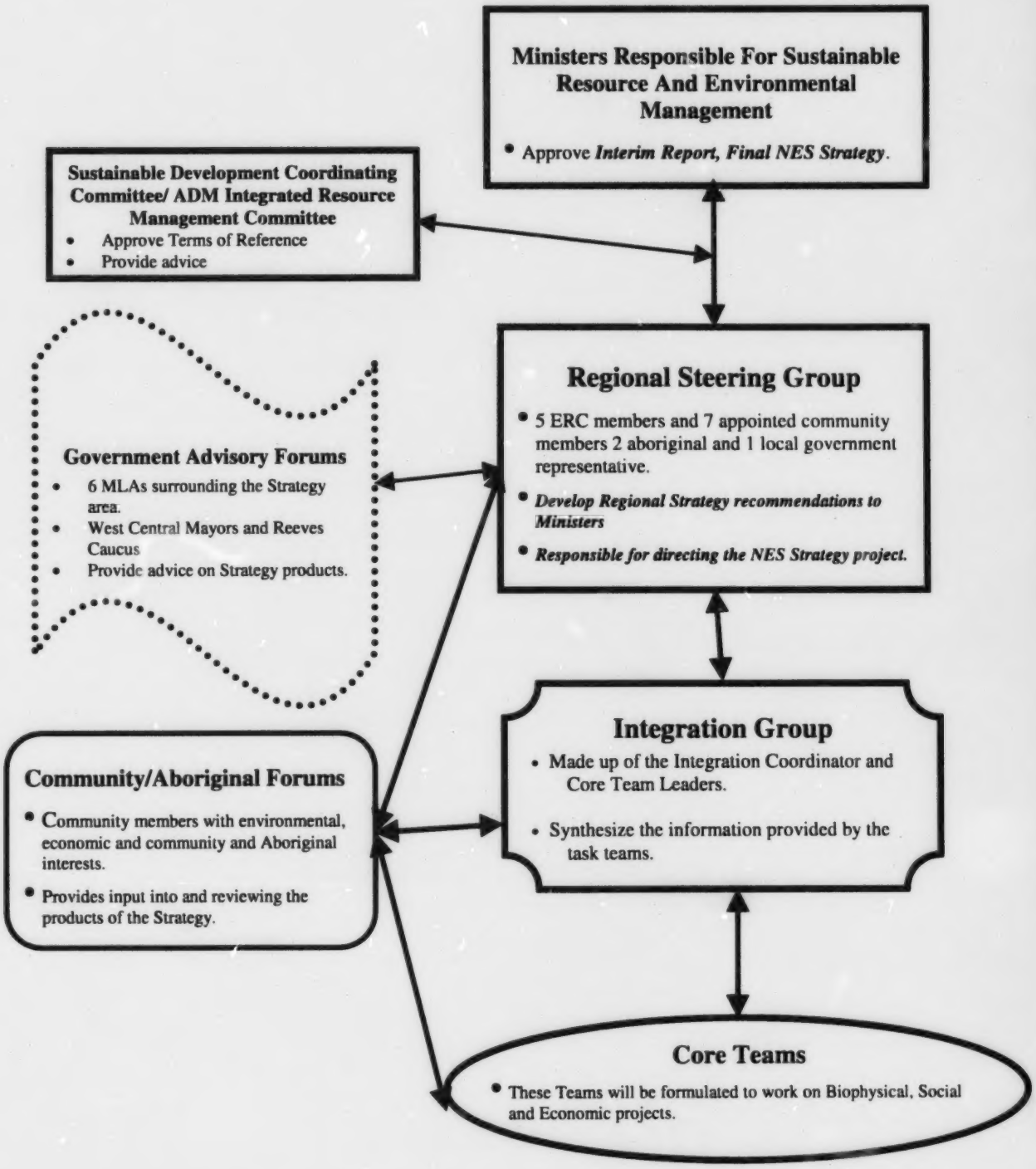
The NES Strategy recommendations will be developed under the direction of a Regional Steering Group for Ministerial approval. The NES Regional Planner will act as Project Manager under the direction of the Steering Group.

The Foothills Model Forest Board has agreed to support the NES Strategy by:

- Providing research data; and technical input on the criteria and indicators for use in the Strategy.
- Reviewing, influencing, critiquing and supporting the interim and final products of the planning process;

The linkages of management and the basic functions of each responsible group are outlined in the following management linkage chart. Appendix I outlines the Roles and Responsibilities of each group in more detail.

FIGURE 2: MANAGEMENT LINKAGE CHART


Ministers Responsible For Sustainable Resource And Environmental Management
• Approve *Interim Report, Final NES Strategy*.
Sustainable Development Coordinating Committee/ ADM Integrated Resource Management Committee
• Approve Terms of Reference
• Provide advice
Regional Steering Group
• 5 ERC members and 7 appointed community members 2 aboriginal and 1 local government representative.
• *Develop Regional Strategy recommendations to Ministers*
• *Responsible for directing the NES Strategy project.*
Government Advisory Forums
• 6 MLAs surrounding the Strategy area.
• West Central Mayors and Reeves Caucus
• Provide advice on Strategy products.
Integration Group
• Made up of the Integration Coordinator and Core Team Leaders.
• Synthesize the information provided by the task teams.
Community/Aboriginal Forums
• Community members with environmental, economic and community and Aboriginal interests.
• Provides input into and reviewing the products of the Strategy.
Core Teams
• These Teams will be formulated to work on Biophysical, Social and Economic projects.

APPENDIX I
ROLES AND RESPONSIBLITIES

Provincial MLAs

Local MLAs surrounding the NES Strategy Area will be informed by the RSG at the following milestone stages:

- Regional vision, values, goals, indicators and issue management;
- Interim Report;
- Forecasted scenarios, objectives and strategies to achieve the regional goals; and
- Final NES Strategy.

(The MLAs to consider are; Ivan Strang, George Vanderburg, Tony Abbot, Ty Lund, Gordon Graydon and Mel Knight.)

MULITIPLE COMMUNITY BASED FORUMS

Municipal Government Forum (NES Mayors and Reeves Council)

Municipal governments would be offered opportunities for input during the following milestone stages:

- Regional vision, values, goals, indicators and issue management;
- Interim Report;
- Forecasted scenarios, objectives and strategies to achieve the regional goals; and
- Final NES Strategy.

The Local Mayors and Reeves Council maybe considered the formal forum for these discussions. Additionally, the Chairperson of this Council and an alternate may be considered a liaison that would also formally sit on the Regional Steering Group.

Aboriginal Forum

Government, industry and the Aboriginal community have a duty to facilitate dialogue and to participate in good faith. Long-term success depends on respect, open communication and co-operation. Therefore, objectives for an Aboriginal forum to participate in the development of the NES Strategy will be:

- Identification of Aboriginal community issues and concerns;
- Identification of Aboriginal sites of interest;
- Development of linkages between the Aboriginal community and the provincial government, industry and municipal governments; and
- Establishment of a forum for consultation.

Community-Based Forums

Communities within the Strategy area include; Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache and Whitecourt. Communities surrounding the Strategy that must be considered are; Jasper, Drayton Valley and Grande Prairie. Each community will be provided opportunities at key stages in the development of the Strategy to review and provide input.

Regional Steering Group

This group would encompass the 7 Northern East Slopes ERC, 1 North West Boreal ERC member and 9 public individuals that would be identified through appointed to the RSG. The RSG is responsible for receiving input from forums and develop recommendations regarding the NES Strategy to the Ministers responsible for sustainable resource and environmental management.
The RSG will:

- Develop initial regional values, goals and indicators, identify issues and concerns for broader community input;
- Review results of community forums;
- Develop Regional Strategic Issues Management products
- Develop Interim Report;
- Review forecast scenarios for community input;
- Review results of community forums;
- Prepare final NES Strategy Recommendations and any additional reports for Minister consideration and approval; and
- Provide direction to the Integration group regarding public consultation, communication, workplans, budget, planning process management, and data management.

Integration Group

Under the guidance of the RSG the Integration Group (IG) will:

- Prepare background information and documentation for the RSG;
- Advise public consultation and communication;
- Co-ordinate and support Core Teams; and
- Synthesis information and provide strategic options to the RSG.

NES-ERC

Would be responsible for:

- Project Support;
- Facilitate the public process to recommend 9 individuals to the RSG. The ERC will submit the Public Notices, develop the position screening criteria and evaluate the applicants, and finally, make recommendation to the Minister of Environment for appointment;
- Liaison with other ERCs within the Province, specifically the North West Boreal, North East Boreal and Parkland committees; and
- Approve Communications plan and products.

APPENDIX 2: REGIONAL STEERING GROUP INFORMATION

Regional Steering Group Information

Peter Aschenmeier

Peter has lived in the Edson area all his life raising four daughters and one son on the family farm. He has also spent many years working in the oil field industry, contract logging business, trucking business and in the heavy construction industry. Peter has been actively involved in community service acting as the vice-chair of the Agriculture Service Board, chair of the Sang Lake Grazing Association, Chair of the NES Grazing Advisory Committee, Chair of the Yellowhead Recreation Board and presently co-chair of Agricultural Land Use Initiative under Ag. 2000.

Gerry Dubé

Gerry is Alberta Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development's representative on the RSG. He lives in Barrhead and has 26 years of experience in managing White Area public lands within the Boreal Forest and Foothills Natural Regions of Alberta. This experience has greatly assisted him to understand the nature of the issues and to prepare him for the challenges inherent in successfully integrating values relating to the economy, environment, and community. (Replaced by Dan Smith on February 20, 2001)

Al Harlton

Al Harlton is Alberta Economic Development's representative on the RSG and based in Edson, serves most of the NES region. Through his career as an entrepreneur and small business owner, Al has been involved professionally in economic development for the last 23 years. Al has experience with developments ranging from energy industry mega projects to small business start-ups. Over the years, he has developed a strong, working knowledge of the balance required in addressing environmental, economic and social issues relating to urban and rural development.

Ron Hooper

Ron is the Superintendent of Jasper National Park. Prior to moving to Jasper in 1997, he lived in the resource-based communities of Ucluelet on Vancouver Island and Queen Charlotte City on the Queen Charlotte Islands while serving as Superintendent at Pacific Rim and Gwaii Hanaas National Park Reserves. Through his career he has had extensive experience in integrated land use planning.

Brad Johnston

Brad has over twenty years experience in environmental management in Alberta relating mostly to the petro-chemical industry and he is familiar with the NES region through both professional experiences and recreational interests. Brad has a degree in environmental studies from the University of Waterloo. He is based in Calgary and is currently working as an environmental engineer with Burlington Resources Canada Energy.

Caroline Kutash

Caroline lives in Hinton and uses her background in natural resources working as an instructor at the Forestry Training Centre in Hinton. She has spent the last 10 years in resource based communities where she has witnessed first hand the boom and bust cycle of economies and the significant changes that occur on the landscape due to resource extraction.

Rick Ksiezopolski

Rick currently lives in Hinton with his wife and two children and has worked in various resource dependent communities for his entire career. His professional background in forestry has included senior positions in private sector forestry management.

David MacPhee

David is the President of Aseniwuche Winewak Nation as well as the President of the Aseniwuche Development Corporation. He is also a trained counselor, experienced logger, member of many committees and boards and skilled translator. David has lived in the North Eastern Slopes area his entire life and has acquired a vast knowledge of the land through logging, trapping, hunting, camping and protection on these lands and through the gathering of Elders' information in protecting these lands.

Gary Mahon

Gary has been a resident of the NES Strategy area for over 50 years, working as a teacher and a principal. He currently serves as the Mayor of the Town of Edson and represents the West Central Mayors and Reeves Caucus on the NES Strategy Regional Steering Group. Gary has also acted as a member of the Sundance Creek Local Committee and now serves as the Town of Edson contact for the Sundance Provincial Park Management Planning Process.

Brenda McFayden-Landry

Brenda has been a Grande Cache resident for the past 10 years and has worked both in environmental program management with a local industry and as a guide in their family owned and operated guide and outfitting business. Over the past few years Brenda has taken an active role in promoting tourism in the Grande Cache area. Her experiences, educational background in biological and environmental sciences and her appreciation of the issues facing the region has greatly assisted her as a RSG member.

Fred Munn

Fred lives in Hinton and is currently employed as the Manager of Technical Services for Luscar LTD's Cardinal River Coals. Over the past few years Fred acted as the Project Manager for the Cheviot Mine Project and currently holds the position of chair for the NES Strategy Regional Steering Group.

Mike Poscente

Mike is vice-chair for the RSG and is currently the NES Regional Director for the Land and Forest Service of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, based in Whitecourt. Over twenty years Mike has been working in Land Management, Forest Management, and Forest Protection functions. His experience in planning, approvals, issue resolution and operations in these functions is of benefit in the NES Strategy development.

Jonathon Russell

Jonathon is a past resident of the Whitecourt area and now lives in St. Albert. He remains connected to the NES region through his roles as Chief Forester for Millar Western Forest Products. His career has spanned the past 30 years being employed within the forestry industry across Canada. He is active in his profession and his community, locally and nationally.

Dan Smith

Dan is currently the Northwest Regional Director for Public Lands of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development based in Barrhead. For over twenty years Dan has worked as a Public Land Manager. His experience with issues relating to the integration of multiple use interests on public land, land use planning, resource allocation and conflict resolution is an asset in the NES Strategy development.

Jennifer Steber

Jennifer represents Alberta Department of Energy on the RSG. She holds a Bachelor of Environmental Studies, a Masters of Landscape Architecture in Regional Planning and a Public Administration Certificate from the U of A. Her range of professional and managerial experience and 12 years of land use planning and resource policy areas experience is a benefit to the NES Strategy.

Rhonda Wehrhahn

Rhonda represents Alberta Resource Development on the RSG. She holds an Agriculture degree in Range and Wildlife Science and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the U of A. She brings a wide range of professional and managerial experience to the steering group with over 22 years of experience in resource evaluation, resource policy and land use planning. (Replaced by Jennifer Steber on June 19, 2001)

APPENDIX 3: THE ABELLS GROUP INC. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION FINAL REPORT

THE NES STRATEGY:

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS OCTOBER – DECEMBER, 2000

FINAL REPORT
SUMMARY ANALYSIS

THE ABELLS GROUP INC.
SUSAN ABELLS
MICHAEL HENRY

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Introduction

The Regional Steering Committee (RSG) has been working to develop a framework for the Northern East Slopes (NES) Strategy by identifying key statements around which the strategy will be developed. These key statements include the regional vision, values and goals for the NES Strategy.

To ensure these key statements accurately reflect the issues and concerns of all stakeholders, the RSG consulted with the general public, Aboriginal Peoples and key stakeholder groups from industry, environmental organizations, and employees from all three levels of government involved in resource and environmental management. (See Appendix 1 for a list of meetings).

Participants attending the meetings were asked to review and respond to the framework statements by examining both their meaning and importance. They were also asked how they would know if this strategy was working five to ten years from now, by identifying criteria that would indicate to them whether the values were being respected and the goals achieved.

Public Consultations

The public meetings were advertised through the local media and by direct mail to a list of 1400 people supplied by the NES Project Coordinator. Follow-up phone calls were also made to remind people on this list to attend. At the meetings, information about the NES Strategy was handed out to participants. It described what the NES Strategy is, how it is building on current government thinking in Integrated Resource Management (IRM), its purpose, the process, and the group responsible for its development (the RSG).

To provide participants with the opportunity to fully participate in the consultation process, by either speaking out and/or by providing written comments, a questionnaire was handed out that followed the format of the meeting. Participants were asked to hand their written comments back at the end of the meeting, along with an evaluation form that examined the effectiveness of the consultation process.

To verify that comments recorded during the meetings accurately reflected both the content and the spirit of the discussion, volunteers were recruited from each meeting to verify the accuracy of the transcript. The written record of each meeting also includes a transcript of the written comments handed in with the questionnaire. The questionnaire also asked participants to list the values in order of priority and to evaluate the consultation process. The results of both of these exercises are included in the written record. (See Appendixes 2 to 14.)

This summary report identifies major themes raised by the consultation process, as well as specific issues related to each of the framework statements.

Broad Themes

Public consultation participants were asked to focus their attention on the vision statement and the specific values and goals developed by the Regional Steering Group (RSG) as a working framework and starting point for discussion about sustainable development for the Northern East Slopes Region.

During the course of the consultations, several broad themes and issues emerged that participants felt must be addressed, for the purpose of adding clarity, confidence and substance to the overall process, and making the specific debate about vision and values more focussed and productive.

Definition of Terms

While there was broad support for a new approach for how land, resources and the environment should be used for the benefit of all citizens, participants were not clear what the RSG meant by key terms such as *development, wilderness, biodiversity, sustainable, conservation, preservation, and healthy environment*. Without clear definitions, many participants felt that no starting point existed for a serious debate on vision and values. Many of them were sceptical, believing that without a clear definition of terms, the decision-makers would have the freedom to interpret the vision and values as they saw fit, and there would be little chance to hold the government accountable.

The Alberta Government, in its March 1999 policy document, stated that Alberta is a leader in sustainable development. Sustainable development is a term widely recognized and used by governments, industry, environmentalists and the general public. Both the Government of Alberta and the RSG, however, use the term Integrated Resource Management (IRM), without clearly defining what it means in relation to sustainable development. For many participants, this added to the confusion.

Standards and Benchmarks

Many participants felt that the real credibility test for the consultation process, and for the management strategy that is developed out of this process, hinges on what standards are used to measure success. For example, if air quality is an indicator of a healthy environment, what level or standard of air quality measures success? There was also concern over what baseline data should be used, whether much of it currently exists, as well as who should collect, verify and manage it.

Support and Concern for a Long-term Plan

While there was wide agreement that a long-term plan for resource and environmental management is necessary, there was confusion over the scope of the NES strategy, how it relates to other strategies and policies, such as the Model Forest and other Integrated Resource Plans and how it relates to local priorities and decision-making.

For long-term sustainability to be achieved, participants recognized that the strategy would have to be responsive to change, as economic and environmental conditions are constantly changing. In the future, they want to see evidence that the strategy will be adaptive and flexible.

Economic Diversification

Although not specifically mentioned by the RSG in its vision statement, values or goals, participants consistently talked about the importance of economic diversification to the well being of their local communities. They insisted that for their communities to be sustainable, their local economies must be diversified and not exclusively resource dependent. Participants were clearly aware of how dependent their local economies are on world resource markets, and believed that a diversified local economy, with an emphasis on secondary industries, would help to shield their communities from the volatility of global markets. They also felt that a diversified economy with both large and small businesses would puts less stress on the environment, provide them with more local autonomy and would be an essential element of a long-term sustainable development plan.

Integration

Participants felt that the importance of integration should be given more visibility and should be stated unequivocally. In terms of the long-term sustainability of their communities, participants recognized that none of the values or goals can stand alone, that they are all interconnected, that no one value is necessarily more important that any other and that if one value is upheld at the expense of another, their community will suffer.

How effectively the RSG will integrate and balance these values is an important concern for many of the participants.

The Consultation Process

While most participants appreciated being consulted, they wondered what the next stage of the consultation would be, and how their comments and suggestions would be incorporated into the final strategy. Some participants, however, were skeptical of how the RSG members were selected. The environmentalists in particular criticized what they believed to be a lack of visibility of the advertising process and a lack of transparency in the selection of RSG members. Many environmentalists feel the RSG's makeup, which claims to represent citizens-at-large, is heavily weighted towards industry, and does not represent a broad cross-section of stakeholder concerns. As a result, most of the large Environmental Non-government Organizations (ENGOs) decided to boycott the process. Nor did they take part in the targeted consultation for Environmental Organizations held on November 8th to voice their displeasure.

Aboriginal communities went one step further. From the consultations held to date, many of these communities indicated they do want to be involved, but not just in the consultation process. They also want to be involved in the decision-making process.

In the report detailing the results of consultations held with Aboriginal Peoples (see Appendix 14) there is a recommendation suggesting that an Aboriginal Steering Group, consisting of representatives from each Aboriginal community with interests in the Northern East Slopes region, be established to ensure full Aboriginal participation in the development and implementation of the NES Strategy. This recommendation came from meetings held with both the Alexis and Alexander Bands. Alexis offered to develop a consultation process that would

offer all Aboriginal Communities full participation in the consultation process, and provide the opportunity for a partnership with the RSG in the development of this strategy.

The introductory meetings held with Aboriginal communities to date clearly identified that the three seats on the RSG reserved for Aboriginal representation was not going to meet their consultation requirements. In each meeting it was identified that no one person, or one band, could represent the interests of any other Aboriginal community. Their process of consultation and consensus, first within their own communities and then with all the other Aboriginal communities affected by the strategy, would require a different working relationship with the RSG than the one prescribed by the three seats currently reserved for their representation.

Specific Issues

The following summary identifies specific issues that were most often raised in relation to each framework statement. These issues are supported by key phrases and words from the transcript. These key phrases are most often paraphrased remarks, and have been identified in the text with italics. When information is directly quoted, it is also identified in the text with italics, but is placed in quotation marks.

The transcripts have been formatted so that readers can quickly refer to each framework statement from each meeting to confirm the relative importance of the issues.

Value #1: Healthy Environment

Definition of terms was consistently raised as an issue. How does the RSG define the word "environment"? In Drayton Valley and Grande Prairie, participants indicated that: *It can mean a thousand different things – from your backyard, or the river valley to the wilderness areas.* Participants also wanted to know how the RSG defines the term "healthy"? Participants attending the targeted consultation for environmental organizations in Edmonton suggested replacing the word "healthy" with the word "sustainable".

When discussing the meaning of this value, participants identified a wide range of possible standards, including *"drinkable water"*, *"pollution-free" and "diversity of ecology"*. They identified the need to find an *"equilibrium"* or *"balance"* that meets the needs of all affected organisms. They also identified that a healthy environment would be a resilient one, an environment that could still *"bounce back"*.

Value #1 - Goal: To ensure that the quality of air, water and soil are maintained at a healthy level for environmental needs.

Participants challenged the RSG members to define what they mean by the words "quality", "healthy level" and "environmental needs".

Participants in most meetings also identified the need to broaden the goal to include biological organisms, so that the goal was not just limited to air, water and soil. They also consistently identified that the word "maintained" was problematic. They believed that this word suggested that the current environment is healthy. Most disagreed with that assumption. Not only did they think that the word "maintained" is not sufficient, but that the goal should strive to improve the health of the environment. Suggested changes to the wording of the goal included adding the word *"restored"* or *"improved"* in addition to maintain.

Value #1 – Criteria/Indicators

To determine whether this value was being respected and the goal achieved, many participants identified the need for *effective monitoring over time.* To do this, participants in many of the meetings identified the need for independent monitoring and baseline data in order to compare results. In Edson, they indicated that this baseline data include *an inventory of what is in the environment and what is healthy and what is not.* In Hinton, they asked if *regional indicators would be compared to provincial, national and international indicators.*

During the meetings, a broad range of criteria were suggested, including the ***improved health of people, animals and other organisms***, which would require a diversity of indicators, such as monitoring:

- ***the health of animal populations and their numbers;***
- ***the health of reforested areas;***
- ***soil erosion, water turbidity, and soil fertility;***
- ***physical changes to the landscape and natural habitat;***
- ***industrial disturbances;***
- ***human use.***

In meetings with government employees in both Edmonton and Edson, participants identified that issues concerning water were ***not only related to the quality, but also to the quantity of water needed for a healthy environment.***

Value #2: Prosperous Economy

Participants asked the RSG to define the term "prosperous". Most participants felt that prosperity meant growth. In Edson, they were concerned that *a prosperous economy suggested that it was more important than a healthy environment*, and questioned why it wasn't enough to have a *healthy economy*, rather than one that is prosperous, and therefore constantly growing.

In Hinton, they felt that *the economy must be in balance with the environment*, and suggested that a *"healthy, sustainable economy"* was more important than a "prosperous" one. In Grande Prairie and Fox Creek, *standard of living* and *quality of life* were important, which could be measured by the quality of services and amenities found in the communities. In Whitecourt, participants felt that *a growing population was important, equipped with all the modern amenities.*

The government employee group in Edson identified that you can have a prosperous Alberta without having a prosperous Grande Cache, and asked *how the strategy was going to attempt to balance the needs of local communities vs. the needs of the province.*

Diversification was identified as an issue in most meetings, with the suggestion in Grande Prairie that one goal statement should specifically address diversification, such as *movement from resource extraction to value-added economic activities.* In Hinton, they clearly stated that *a diversified economy equals prosperity, and that finished products and secondary industry equals more value for products sold.*

Value #2 - Goals

Participants in almost every meeting expressed the concern that these goals do not reflect a sustainable, balanced approach towards achieving a healthy economy. They also identified *"stewardship"* as an issue, and that the goals did not reflect acceptable stewardship of the resources. Nor, as the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) pointed out in their meeting, did the framework statements identify who was responsible for the stewardship of the resources.

Timeframe was also cited as an issue. Many participants suggested that decisions regarding prosperity are often made to achieve short-term goals, rather than long-term ones. Some suggested that industry's time horizon is shrinking dramatically, with economic impacts being measured within a shorter and shorter time horizon. For example in Fox Creek, participants suggested that *industry time horizons used to be 25 years, and that in the oil and gas industry they are now only five years.* In Hinton, economic stability was considered a high priority by most participants, with a goal of getting away from the boom and bust cycle of a resource-based economy.

Goal #1- Maximize the economy: The word "maximize" was challenged in almost every meeting. Participants in most public meetings questioned *who was benefiting from maximizing the economy, and at what cost.* In Hinton, they suggested replacing the word "maximize" with the word *"sustained"*, and suggested that the benefit should be directed towards *individuals, companies and municipalities.* Many other participants suggested replacing "maximize" with the word *"optimize"*. In Grande Prairie they suggested *"efficient utilization of resources"*. In Grande

Cache they suggested that the statement should read: *Resource development for the good of the people of Alberta.*

Goal #2 - Ensure conditions exist that maintain opportunities and certainty for resource development and competitiveness: The government employee group in Edson asked *how do you ensure conditions exist?* While "certainty" was recognized as being important to industry, "conditions" were recognized as being in a constant state of change. *"Flexibility"* was therefore also considered important. In Grande Prairie they suggested the goal should read *...maintain opportunities and certainty, with room for flexibility when new information arises...* Several other participants suggested that there should be more "opportunities" created than just for resource development, and that the word "development" *may not always be consistent with conservation.*

Goal #3 - Maintain our competitiveness: " Competitiveness" was a word that caused considerable concern, and some participants were not sure whether competition within a global context was a good thing, especially in relation to standards of living and wages. In Hinton, they strongly suggested that *values and standards needed to be attached to this goal*, especially if local communities in Canada are expected to bear the burden of keeping industry costs down by competing with the wages and standards of living in the third world. The government employee group in Edson suggested that *a prosperous economy should capture the link to a healthy environment.* They also suggested that *many companies already understand this link and consider it to be part of their effort to stay competitive.*

Value #2 – Criteria/Indicators

Many of the participants suggested that along with common economic indicators, such as employment statistics, GDP, change in disposable income, growth of secondary industries, and numbers of small business start-ups and bankruptcies, that social indicators also be used to measure standard of living and quality of life issues, such as the numbers of cars and houses sold, crime rates, expenditures on local infrastructure, school populations, demographic mix, as well as the numbers and quality of recreational and social services available within communities.

Value #3: Integrity and Fairness in Decision Making

There was a degree of skepticism expressed by participants regarding the degree of integrity and fairness currently taking place around resource and environmental management decisions.

Value #3 - Goal: The decision making process is timely, predictable, consistent, fair, equitable and final (Honors existing commitments)

In terms of process, there was general agreement with the words "timely", predictable", "consistent" "fair", and "equitable". Many participants suggested that *"transparency"* and *"openness"* were two other words that should be added to this list. Rather than equitable, participants in almost every meeting emphasized *"a level playing field"*, between industries, between large and small businesses, and between individuals and industry. CAPP emphasized the word *"clarity"*. Participants in Whitecourt emphasized *"accountability"*.

The government employee group in Edson clearly identified the need for the strategy to be adaptive. They identified the need for *decisions to be consistent, based on good science, which should result in objective decisions, which are neither personally nor politically motivated, and that recognize changes in community values.*

In all meetings, the words "final" and "honoring existing commitments" were considered problematic. In Grande Prairie, participants recognized that industry needs certainty, but that *flexibility to re-visit decisions was important.* As one participant in Grande Prairie indicated, *the only thing that is certain is that everything changes.* In Hinton, one participant asked: *How can this strategy be revisited to reflect changing societal values, scientific information and new technology, if all decisions are final and all commitments must be honored?* Many of the participants identified that *a mechanism to re-negotiate existing commitments, based on new information, new technology and changing values needs to be developed.* Some participants suggested that *fair compensation might need to be considered.*

Value #3 – Criteria/Indicators

Many participants identified the need to *monitor cumulative effects.* That there needed to be a way to measure the cumulative effects of decisions being made, not just the effects taking place on a project-to-project basis. Participants indicated that they needed to see:

- *Evidence that decisions are being made for ecological reasons and not just economic ones.*
- *Evidence that there is one set of rules for everyone.*
- *Who is responsible and accountable for the decision, and how the decision is made.*

- *A demonstration of long-term thinking.*
- *That new scientific studies, which recommend changes to existing commitments, are taken seriously into account.*
- *That a mechanism for making changes to existing commitments, with guidelines and standards, is instituted.*

Some participants suggested *an independent appeals process.* In Grande Cache, participants suggested that they would be able to see this value being respected when *legislative ground rules and regulations begin to change.*

Value #4: Vibrant and Sustainable Communities

Participants in most of the meetings asked the RSG to clarify the definition of a "sustainable" community. Is it one that grows or stays the same? In Hinton, one participant suggested the word "vibrant" was *a feel-good word that did not really mean much.*

Participants consistently identified the key word related to this value as *"diversification", both economically and culturally.* Participants clearly believed that for a community to be sustainable, the economy must be stable and diversified. Government employees in both Edmonton and Edson identified that sustaining a community was not always do-able, if the community was unable to adapt to changing circumstances. This was identified in many of the other meetings as well. In Edmonton, government employees questioned *whether you keep a community going at any cost, even if its' economic reason-for-being is no longer there.*

Participants at most meetings captured the meaning of this value by identifying reasons why three generations would continue to live there:

- *Young people have educational and job opportunities.*
- *There is a diversity of jobs at all income levels.*
- *Families can raise their children there.*
- *There are good support services for seniors.*

Value #4 - Goals

Goal #1 - To understand, respect, and protect a community's culture, and sense of being and belonging: In Grande Cache, an Aboriginal member of the community described a sustainable relationship with the native community to include *successful, on-going relationships and cooperation agreements between industries and native communities, as well as proportional representation of various cultural groups in the economy and in the job market.*

Tolerance and acceptance of other cultures was also mentioned in several of the other meetings as an important aspect of this goal. The word *"cohesive"* was identified as important in Hinton, as a necessary state for a community to be sustainable.

Goal # 2 - To encourage sustainable resource development and economic diversity through regional economic development activities and cooperation: Many of the participants questioned whether "sustainable resource development" included non-renewable resources. They requested that the RSG define the word "resources", and questioned *whether tourism was considered a resource.*

Tourism was consistently identified as part of any future diversification plans. At the Edson public meeting, participants suggested removing the statement "through regional economic development activities and cooperation", which they considered a mechanism for achieving the goal, and not appropriate to the goal statement itself. Participants at the meeting with environmental organizations suggesting moving this goal to value #2 (Economic Prosperity).

Value #4 – Criteria/Indicators

A participant in Edson suggested *monitoring levels of community volunteerism and civic pride* were important criteria of sustainability. There was no real consensus over the issue of growth. Some considered it a criterion to determine sustainability; others suggested that growth be qualified *within sustainable limits*, or *within the limits of the environment's ability to support it*. This particular issue may lend itself to additional community consultations in the development of indicators.

Value #5: Biodiversity

There was much ambiguity and confusion expressed about this value. In Hinton, one participant captured the skepticism by saying: *"Good idea. When is it going to start?"* In Edson it was *"Good Luck!"*

The confusion was perhaps best expressed in the meeting with government employees in Edson, when one participant suggested that *they could not agree on a definition of this term, even within a single department.* Although another participant at the same meeting suggested that *the goal statement itself was an acceptable definition of the term biodiversity.* They also asked what the difference was between "biodiversity" and a "healthy environment", and suggested combining them into a single value.

Meetings in both Grande Prairie and Edson expressed the lack of consensus about man's place within biodiversity: *We as a species tend to separate ourselves from the natural environment. Does the RSG value a functioning ecosystem with man, or separate from man?*

Most meetings identified the need for baseline information for the purposes of comparative data. Timeframe was also identified as a concern. *What snapshot in time was to be used as the yardstick*, or was *time bracketed within a range*, as opposed to a specific moment in time. The words *current and historic habitats* was used in several meetings to capture the concept of time.

In Fox Creek they identified *the need for balance* as the most important characteristic of biodiversity. The need for *education to help protect the environment* was identified in Edson.

Value #5 - Goal: Conservation of ecosystems, species and genetic diversity within the region.

In Edson participants suggested that the word *"preservation"* be added to the goal. In Hinton, Edson and Grande Prairie the size of these areas was important, and concern was expressed that these areas would not survive as *small little postage stamps within the landscape*. In both Hinton and Edson they suggested that habitat needed to be *sufficient and contiguous*. Several participants in Hinton suggested adding the words *"health" "habitat"* to the goal statement: *Conservation and health of ecosystems, species, habitat and genetic diversity....*

In Grande Cache a participant suggested "the region" needed to be expanded to include *the region, the province and the nation.* In Whitecourt they considered *conservation to be a soft approach.* They preferred the word *maintaining, which means harvesting and putting it back.*

In the Grande Prairie government employee consultation, concern was expressed about the boundaries of the region and the need to ensure that decisions that affect another region's management practices be made in consultation with both regions.

Value #5 – Criteria/Indicators

Participants suggested that the range of biodiversity *has to include both small lichens and big game*. Several meetings commented on forestry and mining practices that needed to reclaim/restore the environment to *original forested condition, rather than big meadows with sheep-attracting sweet clover.* There was concern expressed that reclamation practices were reclaiming the land, but without the biodiversity found on the original forest floor, and the trees being planted were all of the same species, *for the sole purpose of re-harvesting rather than reclamation.*

Value #6: Public Enjoyment of the Great Outdoors

The consultations generated three separate, clear, yet equally passionate, approaches to this value.

1. *Conservation and unlimited access don't go together. There should be limits to public enjoyment.*
2. *There need to be separate areas for separate usages.*
3. *No blocking off of access. Areas accessible now are still accessible 10 years from now.*

Nevertheless, participants within each meeting recognized the need for *access management* in order to achieve *access within the limits of sustainability.* Overall, there was recognition that *some things just aren't compatible*, and a general rejection of multiple-use access for all recreational users.

Value #6 - Goal: To provide opportunities for reasonable access to and enjoyment of our natural resources.

There was consistent, vocal concern surrounding the vagueness of the words "reasonable access". Participants in each meeting emphasized that this phrase required clarification. In Drayton Valley, a participant captured it best when they suggested that: *first reasonable access needs to be defined, and then adequate policy needs to be put in place.* In both Edson and Fox Creek, *"balance"* was identified as a key word. Several participants suggested that the word *"fair"* be added to read: *...fair and reasonable access....*

In Hinton a participant suggest that the goal statement read: *To provide a variety of opportunities for people to seek a variety of experiences.* They also suggested that the enjoyment of natural resources be qualified by adding: *without damaging or degrading the natural environment.* In Fox Creek, participants suggested that: *uses need to be compatible.*

In Whitecourt, participants suggested adding *"respect"* to the goal, and emphasized the need for education: *teach people to leave places better than they found them.* Some participants in Edson suggested removing the word "natural" from the goal statement.

A participant in Hinton suggested that: *tourism and recreation as an industry should be added as a goal.*

Value #6 – Criteria/Indicators

Three types of users were identified: industrial, small business (usually in the tourism industry) and recreational users, all of whom need information about access. In Grande Cache, participants suggested a centralized, readily accessible database was needed with up-to-date information regarding access to help lower frustration levels of all users. There was usually a discussion within each meeting about the construction of new roads. In Edson they suggested that a policy was needed to limit the building of new roads: *Industry should get together and use existing roads and share roads, rather than building new ones all the time.* There was also confusion expressed regarding access to these roads, how one day they are open and the next day they are closed. The CAPP consultation identified the need for better co-ordination of infrastructure construction and resource extraction activity, but clearly stated that, in their industry's view, the

responsibility for ensuring co-ordination rested with the 'stewards of the land' – the provincial government.

Other criteria cited included usage statistics, and monitoring the number and variety of opportunities available for access. Also, the levels of awareness, appreciation and understanding of all users for the need to protect the natural environment *from mis-use and abuse,* which should result in improved enjoyment for all users.

Value #7: Wilderness Preservation

In almost every meeting, reference was made to Special Places 2000. Environmentalists are clearly disappointed. Their point of view is perhaps best expressed by an e-mail received from one of these groups: *"The government and industry have made a commitment to the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development, which includes ecological development of our forests. A basic requirement is the establishment of scientifically determined protected areas free of industrial development to act as ecological benchmarks and provide for biodiversity."*

In the meeting with CAPP, one of their participants suggested that, in their opinion, the reason Special Places 2000 failed was because local communities were expected to bear too much of the financial burden, for the both the costs associated with designating and maintaining these areas, as well as losses from potential industrial development. The participant stated that: *if the benefits associated with designating and maintaining these representative wilderness areas accrue to all Albertans and Canadians, then they should share in the costs, and the losses to local economies, associated with these places.*

Government employees in the Edson meeting suggested that the RSG needed to define both "wilderness" and "preservation". Is wilderness necessarily remote, or can it be located within a developed area: *the word preservation means that you cannot let something change – that it can't burn or rot, which is like pickling.* They suggested that *"protection"* may be a better word, and that it can be defined by *inaction – leaving the area to natural processes.*

Value #7: Goal: Ensure representative wilderness areas are designated and maintained.

In most meetings the word "representative" was identified as a term that requires definition. In Grande Cache, a participant suggested that *there are different classes of wilderness. This goal needs to reflect the contribution of wilderness areas to the ecosystem.* Government employees in Edson suggested it was also a question of scale. Was the designated area representative of the region, the province or the world?

In Edson, they asked the RSG to define what they mean by "wilderness", and again referred to the issue of size in relation to these areas: *these areas need to be large enough to ensure ecosystem function and structure.* Education regarding the importance of these areas was also identified as important. In several meetings, participants suggested that: *the word "maintain" does not go far enough.*

On the other hand, there was concern expressed that preserving wilderness meant restricting access for recreational purposes. Others felt that, with the National Parks and Willmore Wilderness area, there were enough protected areas within this region. Some suggested that *we do not need more wilderness areas, but we need to keep what we have healthy.* In relation to health, there was also this reminder: *wilderness preservation leads to forest fires and bug infestations. It needs to be managed carefully.* Still others suggested that in the future, *wilderness may be Alberta's most valuable resource.*

Value #7 – Criteria/Indicators

While some participants expressed their desire to *receive world recognition for preserving wilderness*, and to ensure that *Alberta no longer receives a failing grade from the World Wildlife Fund,* others felt that they *did not need any anyone outside the province telling us if we are doing well or not.*

Value #8: Wise Resource Development

In most meetings, a holistic perspective/approach to this value was encouraged. In Whitecourt participants considered this value to mean cooperation and long-term planning between oil, gas and forestry, *which would lead to more efficient use of the resources we have and sharing of infrastructure.*

Many of the participants in the meetings questioned the word "development". They often suggested the word "use" *rather than "development. They also suggested that the RSG needed to define the terms "wise" and the word "resources" (see value 8, goal #2, below). Government employees in Edson suggested that the word "wise" suggested* a longer planning horizon, than a word like reasonable. *In Hinton "wise" was also equated with* "efficient", *which would mean getting more value out of the resources we are extracting, and refers, again, to the issue of diversification.*

In many cases this value was equated to the decision-making process, and Value #3 (Integrity and Fairness in Decision Making). In Hinton, for example, they suggested that: Wise means forward thinking, and using the best information that you have today to make your decision, and having processes in place to be flexible and review decisions in light of new knowledge and information over time.

Value #8 – Goals

Goal #1 - Optimization and conservation of resources: In may meetings, the word "optimize" and "conserve" were considered to be contradictory. In Whitecourt they suggested replacing "optimization" with "wise use": in some cases you want to maximize, in some cases you want to optimize and in some cases you want to minimize – that is why we say wise use. In Hinton they suggested replacing "optimize" with "sustainable". In Edson, they thought it was important to bring in the concept of stewardship and long-term planning. One participant also suggested using Values #1,4,5 and 7 (healthy environment, sustainable communities, biodiversity and enjoyment of the great outdoors) as guidelines for optimization. In Grande Cache a participant suggested that research and development should be added to the guidelines for optimization.

Goal #2 - To integrate resource development among all stakeholders and government regulators: In Grande Prairie they suggested that the RSG needs to define "resource development" in broader terms, so that it is clear that "no-development" also has value: the attitude right now is that a tree has no value until we cut it down. Value needs to be attributed to the tree left standing in a forest. In Grande Prairie, they also suggested that "resource development" should also include the use and re-use of our resources though recycling. Government employees in Edson suggested qualifying the word "stakeholder" with the word "compatible". In Hinton, they suggesting replacing the word "stakeholder" with the word "public", or at least making sure that it was clear that the public was included in the RSG's definition of the word "stakeholder".

Value #8 – Criteria/Indicator

Many participants identified that wise use of resources would be indicated if a balance has been achieved and all the values respected. They also suggested that Government regulators would no longer be looking at each industry in isolation, but would be effectively measuring the cumulative effects of their decisions. In Grande Prairie they suggested that: there needs to be some authority regulating cumulative effects.

Several participants suggested that resource decisions need to be made in the context of how they will affect our children's children. Some industries, like mining and forestry do have longer planning horizons. Oil and gas, on the other hand have very short ones.

In Hinton, economic diversification was also associated with this value, and that the development of value-added and secondary industries could be used an indicator to determine "wise resource development".

In Grande Cache, one participant identified recognizing Aboriginal issues as criteria for determining whether this value has been respected. These criteria include:

- Respecting traditional uses of the land
- Preservation of traditional plants used by Aboriginal Peoples as medicines
- Preservation of traditional ways and lifestyles.

Value #9: Historical Resources

In most meetings, the definition of what a historical resource is required clarification. Most participants agreed that sites or objects should be "human-made" and have anthropological significance, while some extended it to archeological sites. There was also discussion regarding what constitutes "significant" historical value, and who would make this kind of decision. Most communities consider industries such as coal mining and forestry to have historical significance to the region: Historical coal towns are part of our educational and tourism resources.

Value #9 - Goal: To ensure that historical resources are identified and respected in the decision making process

In Grande Cache, participants recognized the need for on-going involvement of the government in this area. It goes back to the issue of integrity. All users of the land need to be consulted and considered with respect to the use of the land.

Participants in all of the meetings identified the need for the development of a database of historical resources, but in Grande Cache, participants also identified the issue of control and ownership of the information. Aboriginal peoples are concerned about identifying their historical sites if they do not have control of the information. They are concerned that once that information is made public, that it leaves the sites vulnerable to vandalism.

In the CAPP meeting, one of the participants understood this issue and compared it to the Peregrine Falcon research and information collected about their nesting sites and flight patterns. As these birds are extremely rare and valuable, this information was carefully managed and protected to prevent people from disturbing the birds or capturing them for sale in the black market. Since historical resources need to be identified, preserved, and managed, the collection, ownership and access of this information will need to be negotiated with all stakeholders.

In the Grande Prairie government employee consultation, one participant wondered whether the Aboriginal Community's desire to control access to the information was related to the potential monetary gain associated with this access. In the same meeting, another participant questioned why there was anything wrong with this motivation.

In most meetings, education concerning the value and promotion of historical resources was also identified as important. In Hinton, they suggested that the goal statement should read:... are identified, communicated and respected....

Draft Vision Statement

Management of natural resource development in a manner which ensures a sustainable environment, economy and community that can be enjoyed by present and future generations.

Suggestions for improving the sentence are as follows:

1. Several participants at four meetings suggested removing the word "development" after 'natural resource development'. Some suggested replacing 'resource development' with the word "environment".
2. Participants at three meetings suggested adding "healthy" to 'sustainable environment'.
3. Participants at two meetings suggested adding "wise use" and "conservation" to the beginning of the sentence.

The following suggestions occurred in individual meetings, and were not repeated in other meetings:

4. Add "to facilitate" before the word 'development'
5. Add "preserved for" before 'future generations' 1
6. Describe environment, economy and community as follows: a healthy environment, sustainable economy and strong community.
7. Add "freely" after 'enjoyed'
8. Replace the word 'development' with "utilization".
9. Add "in the region" after 'natural resource development'

There was a suggestion to consider the Department of Environment's vision statement that talks about stewardship.

Priority of Values

Most participants chose not to prioritize the values. As one participant commented in Whitecourt: There must be a balance between environment, economy and social community values. How can you put these in priority?

Appendix 1

List of Meetings

1. Public Consultations

October 16	Hinton	Participants: 40
October 17	Grande Cache	Participants: 18
October 17	Fox Creek	Participants: 3
October 18	Edson	Participants: 25
October 19	Whitecourt	Participants: 16
October 23	Grande Prairie	Participants: 12
October 23	Drayton Valley	Participants: 23

Total Public Participation: 137

2. Targeted Consultations

October 30	Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP); Energy and Utilities Board (EUB)	Participants: 12
November 2	Government Employees – Edson	Participants: 55
November 6	Government Employees – Edmonton	Participants: 20
November 8	Environmental Organizations	Participants: 12
November 9	Government Employees – Grande Prairie	Participants: 25
November 15	Forestry industry	Participants: 8
November 29	Agriculture industry	Participants: 11
November 30	Tourism industry	Participants: 0

Total Targeted Participation: 143

3. Aboriginal Consultations

October 16	Nakcowinewak Nation	Participants: 2
October 18	Alexis Indian Band	Participants: 10
October 25	Aseniwuche Winewak Nation	Participants: 11
October 25	Metis Nation of Alberta - Zone 4	Participants: 3
October 31	Alexander First Nation	Participants: 5

Total Public Participation: 31